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ABSTRACT

A study examined the impact of ancestral language oral proficiency and literacy skills on ethnic identity for 66 Armenian-American boys and girls aged 8-15 years. Children were active in an Armenian community in America. Armenian language and literacy skills were assessed and ethnic affinity was measured by relative use of first person pronouns "I" or "we" in narratives about Armenian activities. Attitude was measured by proportion of positive and negative comments made in narratives and responses to open-ended questions about language and culture. Higher scores for Armenian oral proficiency were associated with affinity with the community and positive attitudes towards a bicultural upbringing, controlling for gender, parent ethnic identity, and level of Armenian schooling. Higher scores for Armenian literacy were also associated with these factors. Literacy significantly contributed to the prediction of ethnic affinity over and above that of oral proficiency alone, although there were no additional significant effects of literacy on attitude once controlling for oral proficiency. Among implications for children, parents, educators, and ethnic communities: being bilingual and biliterate members of society may contribute to the self-esteem, and ultimately to the schooling success of minority children. (Contains 36 references; 2 tables of data and a figure are appended.) (Author/CR)

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Implications for Ethnic Identity

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Oral Proficiency and Literacy Skills in an Ancestral Language:

Implications for Ethnic Identity

Abstract

This study investigated the impact of ancestral language oral proficiency and literacy skills on ethnic identity for 66 Armenian-American boys and girls aged 8-15 years. Children were active in an Armenian community in the USA. Armenian language and literacy skills were assessed and ethnic affinity was measured by relative use of first person pronouns I or we in narratives about Armenian activities. Attitude was measured by proportion of positive and negative comments made in narratives and responses to open-ended questions about language and culture. Higher scores for Armenian oral proficiency were associated with affinity with the community and positive attitudes towards a bicultural upbringing, controlling for gender, parent ethnic identity and level of Armenian schooling. Higher scores for Armenian literacy were also associated with affinity and attitude, controlling for gender, parent ethnic identity and Armenian schooling. Literacy significantly contributed to the prediction of ethnic affinity over and above that of oral proficiency alone, although there were no additional significant effects of literacy on attitude once controlling for oral proficiency. Implications for children, parents, educators, and ethnic communities are discussed.

Keywords: Armenian-American, bilingualism, literacy, ethnic identity.

Oral Proficiency and Literacy Skills in an Ancestral Language: Implications for Ethnic Identity

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of oral proficiency and literacy skills in an ancestral language on the development of ethnic identities of minority children and adolescents growing up in the United States. Most minority children in the United States acquire oral proficiency in their ancestral language in the context of their homes, as well as English. Some may later sustain the ancestral language and become literate through community-supported bilingual education, such as that offered by parochial schools or weekend language schools. Other children never acquire the language of their ethnic community beyond the words for such things as common foods and family relationships.

Level of proficiency in oral language and literacy may influence a child's affinity with the normative values and practices of the ethnic group and a child's attitudes towards the ethnic community and mainstream Anglo-American culture. It is conceivable that acquisition of the ancestral language alongside a dominant societal language may provide the child with greater opportunity to become involved in the life of the ethnic community. In addition knowledge of ones' ancestral language may lead to positive attitudes toward one's ethnic community. Literacy in an ancestral language suggests a greater degree of commitment to one's ethnic group and makes available an additional channel of communication through which one can become involved and achieve greater identification with the ethnic community (Saunders, 1988; Ferdman, 1990). However, it is also possible that by requiring minority children to become proficient in both English and their ancestral language, these children are adversely affected. For

example. Edwards (1991) has suggested that the demands of learning two languages may be too great in terms of the psychological well-being of many children.

Furthermore, there is increasing hostility towards bilingual programs in the United States. Although these programs are predominantly transitional and designed to mainstream language minority children into English-only educational settings rather than maintain and promote ethnic community languages, opponents of bilingualism argue that the cost of bilingual education is a drain on state financial resources (Porter, 1990), and goes against the melting pot ideal of mainstream America (Citrin, 1990). On the other hand, many ethnic communities appear to value bilingualism and biliteracy in their American-born children. A large number of ethnic communities in the United States go great expense to provide schooling in the ethnic language through language arts instruction in parochial schools, afternoon and weekend programs (Fishman, 1989). This is a trend that has also been documented for ethnic communities in other countries with traditionally high rates of immigration, for example Australia (Tamis, 1990). Presumably these communities expect positive outcomes in terms of language maintenance and ethnic identification in return for their considerable effort and investment in the next generation.

The study reported here is designed to assess both oral language and literacy skills in Armenian by children being raised in an Armenian community in the USA, and to investigate the relationship between level of language and literacy abilities and level of identification with the Armenian community, as well as level of language and literacy abilities and the children's attitudes towards their bilingual/bicultural circumstances.

Theoretical models for the development of ethnic identity have hypothesized stages of ethnicity that demonstrate increasing awareness and acceptance of one's own ethnic identity

(e.g., Phinney, 1989; Helms, 1990; Banks 1994). In a study with African-American, Asian-American and Hispanic-American adolescents, Phinney (1989) found empirical evidence for three distinct stages of ethnic identity. Some of the adolescents showed evidence of more positive feeling and greater identification with their particular ethnic group as they got older, although reasons for progression between stages are generally little understood. We do know, however, that a number of contextual factors may explain why individuals display differing degrees of awareness and acceptance, including frequency of encounters with members of the dominant culture (Cross, 1978), generation of immigration (Der Karabetian, 1980), and parental attitudes and child-rearing strategies (Spencer and Markstrom-Adams, 1990). Degrees of proficiency in ancestral language and literacy as potential factors in the development of ethnic identity have, however, been largely ignored in models of ethnic identity development.

Elsewhere it has been suggested that language is crucial for membership in one's cultural group in at least two important ways. First, language is the primary medium of socialization. Through language we learn about social norms and attitudes, for example, there are cultures that encode respect and deference in their languages. This is currently proving to be a problem for Cambodian parents in Boston because as children fail to learn Khmer, they lose the means of conveying their understanding of their own and others' place within the community hierarchy. (Smith-Hefner, 1990). Second, languages can be used to signal membership in a particular group. For example, the work of Hewitt (1992) has shown the importance of linguistic markers of ethnicity among afro-Caribbean youth in London. In New York City, Poplack (1988) has shown that skillful code-switching between English and Spanish among Puerto Rican youth functions as a marker of affiliation to the mainland United States and serves to distinguish these adolescents

from those who are more recent arrivals to New York from the island of Puerto Rico.

Studies that have looked specifically at the question of bilingualism and attitude towards the ethnic community give conflicting accounts. While much of this research investigates the effects of attitude on rate of language learning (e.g., Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Clachar, 1997), some studies report that bilingualism can sometimes lead to feelings of alienation from both the ethnic and dominant cultures (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Grosjean, 1982; Mendelberg, 1984), while others suggest that bilingualism has positive effects for ethnic identity (Grosjean, 1982; Heller, 1987; Lambert, 1987; Romero, 1988; Feuerverger, 1991). Much of this research, however, is either anecdotal in nature (e.g., Grosjean, 1982) or the research design of empirical studies is such that it has been difficult to determine how levels of competency in ancestral language may differentially impact ethnic identity. For example, Feuerverger's (1991) work with Canadian college students, suggests a positive return for learning one's ethnic language. However, the relationship between student's self-reported language proficiency and measures of identity is not reported. Another issue left unresolved is whether these individuals differed from the English-only speaking members of their ethnic communities in terms of their ethnic identity.

There has also been some suggestion that there may be no link between knowledge of an ancestral language and ethnic identity. For example, Edwards and Chisholm (1987) found that among adult Canadians who could not speak their ancestral language there was still a sense of belonging to their ethnic community. However, without a direct comparison, we still do not know whether the reported sense of belonging among these monolingual Canadian's differed from that of members of the same ethnic groups who had maintained the ethnic language.

A study of Armenian-American children (Imbens-Bailey, 1996) extended this line of

research by including a comparison group of English-only speaking Armenian-American children who nevertheless were involved in the life of the Armenian community. Children who reported that they were bilingual English/Armenian speakers tended to identify more closely with their Armenian community and had more favorable attitudes towards both Armenian and mainstream American cultures than children who reported that they were functionally monolingual English speakers. However, this study was limited by the fact that it contained only a small number of monolingual English-speaking children and that it relied on self-reported language abilities rather than independent language assessments.

Another limitation of this and other studies of the relationship between language and ethnic identity is the almost exclusive focus on spoken language. Where researchers have addressed the issue of literacy for the development of identity it has been primarily in the context of education in nations of the developing world and the expression of nationalism, for example, the work of Paulo Freire (1973; 1993) in Latin America. King's (1994) ethnography of literacy and the ethnic identities of the indigenous peoples of Mexico showed a powerful effect of acquisition of reading and writing in Spanish on shift in identity from that of Indian to that of Mestizo (the Spanish dominant culture). However this study did not look at the effects of literacy in native languages such as Mayan or Zapotec on participants' ethnic identity.

Although the discussion of ancestral language literacy and its ties to ethnic identity has been largely theoretical or anecdotal, we can surmise a positive if complex relationship between the two. For example Ferdman (1990) suggests that once a child is literate in the ancestral language literate activities such as reading a community newsletter may serve to maintain ties with the community, and we might presume that literacy will in turn promote further acquisition

of the ancestral language.

To summarize, previous research is largely inconclusive due to contradictory findings and the lack of meaningful comparison groups by which to judge the effects of ethnic language knowledge and there remains a real dearth of research on the role of literacy acquisition in an ancestral language as children and adolescents go through the process of ethnic identity formation. This study addresses this dearth by investigating the effects of both oral proficiency and the acquisition of literacy in Armenian, on the development of ethnic identity by Armenian descended children and adolescents growing up in an Armenian neighbourhood of a large city in the northeastern United States. The specific aims of this study were to find out 1) whether a continuous measure of proficiency in an ancestral language was related to children's degree of affinity and type of attitude towards their bicultural situation, and 2) whether literacy in an ancestral language enabled the next generation of community members to identify with their ethnic group any more than oral proficiency alone.

Method

Study Participants.

The sample consisted of 66 children and adolescents. The target population was children who were active in Armenian community institutions in a lower-middle class urban neighbourhood. This community was chosen because it contained children of varying degrees of proficiency in Armenian who were involved in the community allowing for within-group comparison of the effects of oral language and literacy on ethnicity. Children ranged in age from 8-15, encompassing the period when identity issues are most salient. This age range also provided opportunity for even the youngest children to have acquired some oral fluency in

Armenian as well as literacy skills.

Children were recruited by contacting parents with children in Armenian elementary, Saturday and Sunday schools. Table 1 gives summary information about children's background characteristics. The majority of children were born in the USA to immigrant parents. Most attended or were graduates of Armenian elementary schools. A number of children were born outside the United States and sensitivity of the results to their inclusion in the study was checked and is reported in a later section.

Data Collection Procedures.

Session One: During a one-on-one interview, children were given a series of verbal prompts for personal narratives in English about activities with the Armenian community (e.g., Tell me what you did for Armenian Christmas on January 6) as well as prompts for more general topics (e.g., Tell me about the nicest thing that ever happened to you). Children were then asked to respond to a number of open-ended questions about language use and cultural activities, preferences, and beliefs (e.g., In what ways do you belong to the Armenian community?). (See Imbens-Bailey, 1996 for further details about this interview protocol). All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed using the conventions of the Child Language Data Exchanges System (MacWhinney & Snow, 1985) to facilitate computer-assisted frequency counts.

Session Two: A native speaker of Armenian administered assessments of Armenian language and literacy skills. Oral language and reading assessments took place one-on-one with each of the children, while the written assessment took place either individually or in a classroom setting.

Parent Survey: A written questionnaire soliciting background information was given to

parents. The questionnaire requested information about patterns of home language use, generation of immigration, parent ethnicity, parent level of education and rationales for choosing bilingual schooling for children.

Language and Literacy Measures.

The language and literacy measures were developed specifically for this project in the absence of standardized tests of Armenian oral and literacy skills for this particular age group and bilingual population. These assessments were designed to be authentic tests of skills used by members of the community, for example, telling stories, sustaining a conversation, reading environmental print (store signs) and writing letters to relatives. The assessments followed a developmental sequence from simple routinized skills through more challenging contextualized skills to the most challenging of tasks requiring decontextualized language and literacy skills (See Appendix).

Ethnicity Measures[1].

Ethnic Affinity. The relative frequency of first person singular pronouns I, me, my etc., and first person plural pronouns we, us, our etc. in personal narratives about Armenian activities was used as an indicator of affinity with the ethnic community. A number of studies within psychology have used the frequency of personal pronouns as a pronominal index of speaker orientation towards others (e.g., Dreyer, Dreyer & Davis, 1987). There is also informal evidence that use of particular first person pronouns is taken by the listener as an indication of the speaker's affiliation with others. Robert Reich, a former Secretary of Labor in the Clinton administration, described that he explicitly listened for reference to I and we in his meetings with US workers in order to assess a workforce's sense of unity with management (Reich, 1997).

For an analysis of ethnic affinity using a pronominal index, the speaker needed to be given a context in which their use of personal pronouns would not be unduly constrained to use of the first person singular, which may have been the case in answers to open-ended questions. Thus only the personal narrative data were analyzed for the ethnic affinity measure. The proportion of all we coded items relative to all the we and I coded items was used in all subsequent analysis to take account of differences in absolute numbers of self-reference pronouns across children.

The validity of a pronominal index used as a measure of ethnic affinity was assessed by conducting identical analysis of the children's responses to general narrative prompts. These narratives had been elicited to provide comparison stories about the children's participation in non-Armenian cultural events. No significant relationships between relative use of I/we in these non-Armenian narratives and language/literacy in Armenian were found.

Attitude-rating: Both personal narratives and responses to open-ended questions were analyzed for the frequency of positive (e.g., cool, fun, good) and negative (e.g., hate, unhappy, annoying) lexical items contained in comments about Armenian and American culture and language. Attitudes towards both Armenian and mainstream American cultures were combined in the one measure to reflect the bicultural nature of the children's circumstances. This measure was used in subsequent regression analyses, however, follow-up analyses of attitudes towards each separate culture were also conducted.

The proportion of positive lexical items relative to both positive and negative items formed the measure for attitudes. Reliability was calculated on nine (14% of the total) transcripts. Reliability expressed as a simple agreement between two coders for whether a lexical item conveyed positive or negative attitude was .80. Cohen's kappa, a conservative estimate of

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reliability that takes account of chance agreement between two coders, was .57, a moderate level of agreement according to the guidelines in Landis and Koch (1977).

Analytic Approach.

Complementary analyses were used. Regression models were built to determine associations between predictor variables (Armenian oral language score and Armenian literacy score) and outcome variables (pronominal index of ethnic affinity and attitude-rating), controlling for important rival predictors such as gender, age, born in the USA, generation of immigration to USA, level of schooling in Armenian, parent level of education, the Parent Armenian Identity Scale (a composite variable of parent attitude, dominant home language, and ethnic label) and parent rationales for bilingual schooling. Sensitivity analyses found that results of final models were not sensitive to the removal of foreign-born children. Qualitative analyses were also conducted on both narratives and open-ended responses. These analyses determined the contexts (i.e., people, places) in which children used I and we to refer to their Armenian cultural activities, and the contexts for their positive and negative attitudes towards the Armenian and mainstream American cultures separately by cultural group.

Results

Oral proficiency and ethnic identity.

The children's oral language performance is given in Table 2. The average oral language abilities were as follows: children performed well on recitation of the Armenian alphabet and answered familiar questions. They were able to sustain a 3 minute conversation with an unfamiliar conversational partner, but the average performance was characterized by dysfluencies, grammatical errors and slow rate of production. The typical personal story in

Armenian consisted of just one or two ungrammatical utterances.

As a group, children produced 244 narratives in English about Armenian cultural events or activities. On average, 45% of the children's first person pronouns were in the plural form we for their stories about activities with their Armenian community. Higher scores for Armenian oral proficiency were associated with higher proportions of we on the pronominal index of affinity with the Armenian community ($t = 2.0$, $p = .05$), controlling for gender, parent ethnic identity and level of Armenian schooling.

On average, children made many more positive than negative comments about their linguistic and cultural experiences (overall children had a mean of 73% of items coded as positive). Higher scores for Armenian oral proficiency were associated with positive attitudes towards a bicultural upbringing ($t = 2.8$, $p = .007$), controlling for gender, parent ethnic identity and level of Armenian-schooling. These results are consistent with the results of Imbens-Bailey (1996) in which a coarser, dichotomous (monolingual English versus bilingual Armenian/ English) measure of oral proficiency based on self-report was used.

Literacy and ethnic identity.

The average literacy skills in Armenian were as follows (See Table 2): Children performed well on reading and writing the Armenian alphabet, and on reading and comprehending environmental print. They could read and comprehend a familiar text, and accurately wrote simple and unrelated novel sentences. However, there were inaccuracies in reading and difficulties in comprehending an unfamiliar text, as well as in the production of extended written discourse in the form of a letter.

Higher scores on the measure of Armenian literacy were associated with ethnic affinity.

(t = 3.3, p = .002), controlling for gender, parent ethnic identity and Armenian schooling. In the following example, an 11-year-old who demonstrated a high level ability in Armenian oral language and literacy skills provided a story in response to a prompt for a narrative about an Armenian Celebration, in this case the tenth anniversary celebration of her school.

> We had dinner. And then we talked a little with my friends. And then we went dancing. And we were... we had real food. We had a lot of fun.

This is in marked contrast to the following 11-year-old who demonstrated a low level of ability in Armenian oral language and literacy skills. In response to a prompt for give a narrative about Armenian Christmas celebrations he said,

> I just go to church for Armenian Christmas and hold candles at the alter... I skipped the day school.

Qualitative analyses suggested that the reason less proficient speakers, readers and writers of Armenian used we less than I was because they restricted their use of we to just family and friends. The more proficient speakers, readers and writers of Armenian included family, friends and a wide range of casual Armenian acquaintances in their use of we in stories about Armenian cultural activities.

Higher scores on the measure of Armenian literacy were also associated with attitude (t = 2.4, p = .02), controlling for gender, parent ethnic identity and Armenian schooling. In the following, a 10-year-old who demonstrated a low level of oral proficiency and literacy skills tells about her experience with the Armenian language,

> Sometimes I don't like knowing Armenian cause like my parents speak so much Armenian. I hate talking Armenian. It messes me up so much.

Figure 1 shows each child's percentage of positive lexical items that have referents related to Armenian culture plotted against each child's percentage of positive lexical items that have referents related to mainstream American culture. This enables us to simultaneously see whether children had a relative preference for one culture over the other. We see that most children (45) had predominantly positive attitudes towards both the Armenian and mainstream American cultures (50% or more positive lexical items about Armenians and Americans). Just one child had predominantly negative attitudes towards both cultures. Fifteen children favored the Armenian culture over mainstream American culture and five the reverse. Of the children who were predominantly positive about their bicultural situation, 11 said exclusively good things about their Armenian culture and Armenian people, for instance many enjoyed festivals, speaking the language, visiting Armenian relatives, and some wanted to go to Armenia one day. Sixteen of the children with prevailing positive attitudes said exclusively good things about Americans and the mainstream American culture, for instance they were glad they could speak English for wider communication purposes, America was appreciated as a free country (compared with some other host countries of the Armenian diaspora) and all kinds of American sports and leisure activities were enjoyed. Five children said only good things about each culture.

Overall, qualitative analyses suggested that the children who were least proficient in Armenian oral and literacy skills were primarily negative about those who spoke Armenian around them. However, the more literate and proficient speakers claimed they enjoyed the secrecy Armenian afforded them and were appreciative of the metalinguistic skills associated with language learning.

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Does literacy in an ancestral language matter for ethnic identification?

The children's level of literacy skill in Armenian significantly contributed to the prediction of ethnic affinity over and above that of oral proficiency (t =2.6, p =.01), again controlling for other correlated factors (gender, parent ethnic identity and Armenian schooling). However, there were no additional significant effects of literacy skills on attitude towards a bicultural upbringing, when controlling for oral proficiency, as well as gender, parent ethnic identity and Armenian schooling. Conceivably being literate Armenian speakers can put children in closer contact with their Armenian community, but oral proficiency alone appears sufficient to predict that children will develop a positive attitude towards their bicultural world.

Discussion and Conclusions

There is increasing awareness in the United States that not every child is raised in a mainstream, English-speaking household and that this has an impact on children's development (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). At the same time, bilingual programs are under attack, particularly those that serve to maintain a child's ethnic language alongside their acquisition of English (e.g., Porter, 1990). The findings of this study show that there are differences in how children will react to their upbringing depending on whether they have acquired the language and literacy skills needed for participation in their ethnic community.

These findings have implications for the choices we make as educators, parents and members of ethnic communities. First addressing the question of whether state-funded schools should invest in the teaching of ancestral languages other than for the purposes of transitioning into mainstream classrooms, it is an unfortunate reality that bilingual education has had many detractors who have argued that bilingualism has detrimental effects on children. Although most

of the negative educational and social claims about speaking two or more languages have been found lacking because bilingualism has been largely confounded by racial prejudice on the part of the majority culture, still only small and often transient cognitive advantages have been found in bilinguals (e.g., Ben-Zeev 1977; Hakuta & Diaz, 1985). A potentially more powerful argument for support of bilingual and bicultural education may lay in showing a relationship between knowledge of the ancestral language and children's psychosocial well-being. Literature on the psychological well-being of children has argued for the positive effects of high self-esteem on school achievement (Wiggins, 1994). Being a bilingual and biliterate member of society may contribute to the self-esteem, and ultimately to the schooling success of minority children.

Second, parents in ethnic communities are the ones who must initially decide whether to raise their children as bilingual speakers of the ancestral language and English or to allow their children to acquire only English. Even if parents have a strong identification with their ethnic group and children start out initially identifying as their parents do, as children get older parents are no longer their main reference group rather children look to their peers as a group with whom to affiliate. Without knowledge of the ancestral language children will be less likely to affiliate with a peer group consisting of other children from the ethnic community. Furthermore, if they are illiterate in the ancestral language, children will have no access to print materials that could readily serve to further ethnic affiliation in the absence of a peer group of the same ethnicity.

Third, many ethnic communities are working with the untested assumption that there is a strong positive tie between knowledge of the ethnic language and affiliation with the ethnic community. For example, parents in the Armenian community were willing to go to the expense of bilingual schooling because they believed that the Armenian language was necessary for

"Knowing our history" for "Expanding our heritage" and for "Advancing knowledge of the Armenian culture." Evidence of how widely held such assumptions are comes from the work of Fishman (1989) who went to considerable trouble in the late 1980's to compile simple demographics of the number of children learning an ancestral language, the languages they were learning and the circumstances in which they were being taught to speak, read and write in the language of their ethnic communities. He estimated that close to a million school-age children in the United States are receiving some formal training in a language other than English. This figure does not include those children who are already receiving bilingual services in the state-funded school system, for example children enrolled in a Spanish or Portuguese transitional bilingual program. Nor does this figure include those children incidentally exposed to instruction in an ancestral language during the course of regular school curricula (e.g., French, Spanish, Japanese, German). A wholly undocumented but most likely even larger group of children may sustain their bilingual and biliterate status through informal contact with speakers of their ancestral language - commonly parents and grandparents.

Fishman identified 51 language communities (not including 100 different native American languages) that provided some support for language and literacy instruction. The Armenian community itself provided at least 12 full-time schools across the USA. These schools provide all the requirements of a state-funded education plus additional hours of instruction in Armenian language arts, history and culture. However, the majority of instruction in Armenian takes place just once a week in Saturday or Sunday schools.

Ethnic communities in the United States receive no government funding yet operate between them more than 6,500 schools and programs to provide the opportunity for school-age

children to become literate speakers of their ancestral language. Communities go to these lengths because they believe that something good comes of learning an ancestral language. Communities are fostering a new generation of adherents, who by speaking the ancestral language can help maintain a community with all its rituals and values. However, communities may go to these lengths at the risk of putting a great burden upon school-age children to maintain the community - a burden that Edwards (1991) has reminded us may be too great for the psychological well-being of children. However, this study suggests that there is a relation between being a literate speaker of one's ancestral language and ethnic identity, and that for many children this identification is a positive experience.

To conclude, I argue that initially greater proficiency in Armenian language and literacy skills results in greater ethnic identification. This is more plausible than the reverse because at the outset it is the parents' choice to pursue bilingual and biliterate training, not the child's own degree of identification that determines the child's enrollment in Armenian classes. However, as a child gets older, awareness of ethnicity is likely to impact their decision to stay in Armenian school and continue the acquisition of Armenian language and literacy. In this sense the relation between language and ethnicity becomes a cyclical one with each impacting the other as individuals progress through life.

In the future, a longitudinal study will be necessary in order to more clearly determine the direction of causality between language, literacy and ethnicity. The results of the current correlational study are consistent with the largely anecdotal evidence that language and literacy in an ancestral language are related to ethnic identity. The children and adolescents who were the most accomplished speakers, readers and writers of Armenian demonstrated the most affinity

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towards their Armenian community and had more positive things to say about their bilingual and bicultural situation. Being a literate speaker of Armenian required extra effort and signaled an even greater affiliation to the community over and above the ability to merely speak Armenian.

Notes

1. All ethnicity measures were piloted (See Imbens-Bailey, 1996 for further details).

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Table 1

Summary information for participant children. (total sample n=66)

	n	Proportion
Gender (M,F)	39,27	(.59),(.41)
Mean age (sd)	10;10 (1;7)*	
US-born	56	(.84)
2nd generation American	42	(.67)
3rd generation American	4	(.06)
Mixed generation American	10	(.15)
Mean age on arrival for foreign-born (n=10) (sd)	3;6 (1;8)*	
Armenian elementary school	40	(.61)
Armenian Saturday school	23	(.35)
Armenian Sunday school	3	(.05)

Note: *age given in years and months.

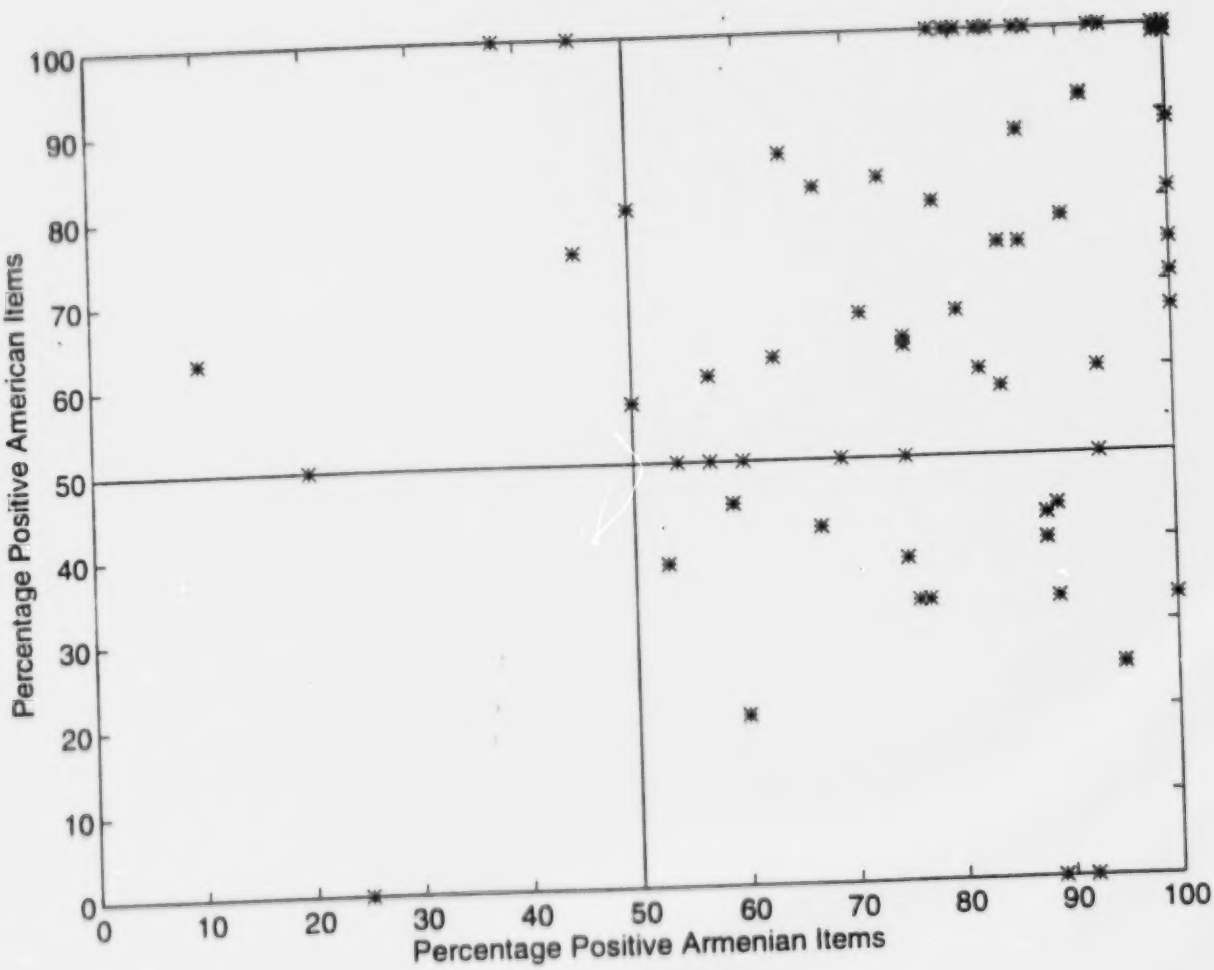
Table 2

Results of Armenian oral language and literacy assessments for Armenian-American children and adolescents, (n=66)

Assessment	Mean %	s.d.	Minimum	Maximum
Oral language	67	18	12.5	92.5
Reading	77	28	2	100
Writing	72	20	0	88
Total literacy	74	23	3	98

Figure Caption

Figure 1: Scatterplot of attitudes towards Armenian and American peoples and cultures.


Percentage Positive American Items
Percentage Positive Armenian Items
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100

Appendix

Armenian Oral Language Assessment:

Level 1: Recite Armenian alphabet

Level 2: Answer familiar questions

Level 3: Conversational interaction with unfamiliar adult

Level 4: Personal narratives about activities and events

Armenian Reading Assessment:

Level 1: Read letters of Armenian alphabet

Level 2: Read common sight words found in community

Level 3: Read and comprehend familiar text

Level 4: Read and comprehend unfamiliar text

Armenian Writing Assessment:

Level 1: Write own name and letters of alphabet

Level 2: Take dictation of common words

Level 3: Compose sentences with common words

Level 4: Compose letter to acquaintance about a recent non-shared event.